



EDUCATION SYSTEM IN METROS IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Since Chetan Bhagat is the product of IITs and IIMs, he builds up the background of these institutes and presents his autobiographical vents in fictional tone. The paper presents the status, craze and vulnerability of IITs and IIMs which are the emblems of educational setup in metro cities of India. The paper explores the ragging system prevalent in these institutes and craze for placement by getting good education from the premier institutes. Education from the branded institutes, like IITs and IIMs, can help them to get a lucrative placement in life. This is the option for them to raise their economic condition, their lifestyle and status in their respective societies.

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INTRODUCTION

Chetan Bhagat's novels reflect the present system of education prevalent in the metro cities. The affluent and the middle class family students aspire for the best education in Indian Institute Technology or Indian Institute of Management. Since the novelist is the product of these institutes, he builds up the background of these institutes and presents his autobiographical vents in fictional tone.

Status of IIT and IIM in India

These institutes, IITs and IIMs are the emblems of educational setup in metro cities of India. They are the pride of India to grant the best education in the liberal form. The educationists have the liberal idea of education as thought by the experts. The experts of education conform to the idea of education given below:

"There are two aspects to traditional liberal education which should be distinguished, even when they are closely related to each other.

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The first perhaps most emphasized by writers like Peters, Hirst, and indeed Barrow is that of inculcation into high culture of the civilization which the young person being educated has inherited. ----The second element is the development of character - not just in the sense of moral education but also in the development of an ability to exercise independent thought and judgment (Gingell, John, 2014)."

In addition to the above idea, Cardinal Newman has illustrated the process of training in *The Idea of a University*, in the following words:

"This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal Education; and though there is no one in whom it is carried as far as is conceivable, or whose intellect would be a pattern of what intellects should be made, yet there is scarcely any one but may gain an idea of what real training is, and at least look towards it, and make its true scope and result, not something else, his standard of excellence (Newman, 1907)."

The pillars of technical and management education, IITs and IIMs, as per the basic disciplines in the institutes, are serving the very need and expansion of knowledge and expertise not only to India but to the whole world. They are catering the educational needs of learners from metro cities of India. The novelist has presented his autobiographical viewpoints with the fictional touch in the novel. The first novel of Chetan Bhagat, *Five Point Someone*, narrates the story of three IIT graduates, Hari, Alok and Ryan and their life at India's Premier Technology Institute, IIT Delhi. The title of the novel '*Five Point Someone*' is taken from GPA system used in IIT for the academic evaluation. In the ranking system in IIT five points are considered average rank. All the three protagonists are just the five point something, in other words the average students of the institute.

Ragging in the Educational Institutes

At the very outset of the novel, *Five Point Someone*, the novelist embarks upon the issue of ragging in the premier Institute, IIT Delhi in the name of introduction. The fresher students are taken up by the seniors in the name of introduction. The freshers, Hari, Alok and Ryan are three main characters who are roommates and studying in the same mechanical department at IIT. The seniors attacked on the three freshers in the name of introduction. Their way, manner, style and the attitude was shocking and terrorizing, as given below:

"As per tradition, seniors rounded us up on the balcony for ragging at midnight. I was still rubbing my eyes as three of us stood to attention and three seniors faced us. A senior named Anurag leaned against a wall. Another senior, to my nervous eye, looked like a demon from a cheap mythological TV show—six feet tall, over a hundred kilos, dark, hairy, and huge teeth that were ten years late meeting orthodontist. Although he inspired terror, he spoke little and was busy providing background for the boss, Baku, a lungi-clad human toothpick, and just a smelly is my guess." 3. This was the very first scene of terror in the name of ragging in the campus and three of the freshers were first got surmised and terrorized.

Later on the talk of the seniors followed: *"You bloody freshers, dozing away eh? Rascals, who will give an introduction."* he screamed.

"I am Hari Kumar sir, Mechanical Engineering student, All India rank, 326." I was nothing if not honest under pressure.

"I am Alok Gupta sir, Mechanical Engineering student, All India rank, 453." Alok said.

"Ryan Oberoi, Mechanical Engineering student, All India rank, 91 sir," Ryan said in a deep husky voice and all eyes swung to him. (P-03, *Five Point Someone*)

The seniors were making fun of them and their dress materials, as a part of ragging in the name of introduction. Immediately they came to pass orders on the junior students of engineering. The seniors were very cruel and demonic in their behaviour towards the freshers in the IIT Delhi and came to their mean crushing on them, as it happens in the flowing dialogue between them:

"You bastards," Baku was shrieking, *"Off with your clothes."*

"Aw Baku, let us talk to them a bit first," protested Anurag, *leaning against the wall, sucking a cigarette butt.*

"No talking! Baku said one scrawny hand up. "No talking, just remove those damn clothes."

Another damn grinned at us, slapping his bare stomach every few seconds. There seemed to be no choice so we surrendered every item of our clothing, shivering at the unholy glee in Baku's face as he walked by each of us, checking us out and grinning.

Nakedness made the difference between our bodies more stark as Alok and me drew figures on the floor with deeply embarrassed toes trying to be casual balloon figures.-----

Baku told Alok and me to step forward, so the seniors could have better view and a bigger laugh.

"Look at them mothers fed them until they are ready to explode, little Farex babies," Baku cackled. (P-03/04, *Five Point Someone*)

These seniors were smiling with tongue in the cheek and making fun of the freshers in every possible manner. On the other hand, the freshers were trembling in their naked condition and with feeble requests asking them to finish the dirty game of introduction:

"Sir, please sir, let us go sir," Alok pleaded to Baku as he came closer.

"What? Let you go? We haven't even done anything yet to you beauties. C'mon bend down on all fours now, you two fatsos." (P-04, *Five Point Someone*). The seniors were asking the freshers to be animals in the naked condition. It was the worse the freshers could dream for them. These fresh guys were in tears and very pitiable condition under the clutches of the seniors. Baku showing his brute strength and a symbiotic relationship of slave and the owner repeated the command:

"C'mon, do what he says," the demon admonished. (P-04, *Five Point Someone*)

As a result, Alok and his companion bent down on all fours and suffered the agony of becoming animals in their naked condition. Above all, the next command was to race with the senior over-riding them. The seniors were very adamant to continue further new game of humiliation upon the freshers. Ryan, one of the freshers became sick of the non-sense commands of Baku and revolted against their orders:

"Come, you bastards," Ryan swore, his face scarlet like a watermelon slice. Baku and the demon retreated a few paces." (P-05, *Five Point Someone*) Thus the whole drama of the ragging came to an end when the freshers rebelled against the cruel and tormenting seniors. It is an evil practice in all premier institutes. Later on, after the ranging session by seniors, these three strange students became close associates and they stand up for each other's during the four years at IIT on every occasion, despite their personal conflicts several issues.

Education in IITs & IIMs vs. Lucrative Placement

Hari, Alok and Ryan are three main characters in *Five Point Someone*. They are roommates and studying in the same department at IIT.

They are far from the image of an IIT graduate is generally perceived to be and more like an average middle class youth. In the novel Hari narrates the story. He is an average in study, seems confused but he keeps all three friends together, always taking the easy way out, fall in love and had sex with the daughter of his head of the department. Ryan is son of rich parents, a born rebellion. He hates his parents, as he feels neglected by them. He wants to be innovator and he thinks that the IIT system puts hurdle in one's innovation. Alok belongs to a typical lower Indian middle class family, burdened with lots of expectations and responsibility. He wants to get good GPA so that he can get a good job and support his family. This makes him some times selfish.

They found themselves stuck in IIT system. They get bored with study, assignments and projects and wanted to enjoy the life and have fun to its fullest. This leads to their lower GPA in class quiz and exams. They managed to secure hardly 5 points GPA at a scale of 10, ranking near the end of their class. And this means the end of their bright career. The system is explained in the following manner:

“We reached the insti where a crowd of students gathered to see their first set of grades. From these one could determine their first grade point average, or GPA, on the 10point scale. The topper would be close to 10.00, while the average would be around 6.50. We, however, were closer to the bottom.” (P-60, Five Point Someone). This was not the hopeful grade for the three friends and they were analyzing their situation in the light of GPA in the following lines: “I thought a little about my little GPA. Yes, a five-pointer was pretty crap. From now on every prof would know that I was a below average student and that would influence my grade in future courses. I knew a few five-pointer who were panned at campus recruitment last year. This was crap, how did I get into this situation? Was I just not smart enough? -----There was the studious Venkat, who never left his room and was always quiet at meals. Today he was smiling. He had a nine point five.” (P-62, Five Point Someone) The protagonist is very much conscious of the fate of five point student who would rarely get a placement in a good company with a lucrative package. The complete race in these institutes is for the getting of good jobs of high class profile and students remain fully aware of this position. The story describes the ups and downs of their life in campus. Their reaction on scoring lowest GPA in the class, how they are perceived by students and professors on the basis of their GPA, their affection, their conflicts, their drinking habit and their strategy to beat the system. In *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*, Chetan Bhagat narrates the education system in IIM, Ahmedabad for the golden future of the coming youth. The background of the story is set in IIM, Ahmedabad. The main characters are all moving about and show their concern over their friendship and differences, study and enjoyment, career and ambition, parental pressure and peer pressure, love and sex.

The author throws light on the aims and ambitions of the protagonists and their focus on making a lucrative career by getting degrees from the premier institutes. When the three friends realized that their future is at the stake they make a plan to steal the paper from his professor's office. What happened to their plan? What happened to their career and dream? Would Hari able to get married with Neha? Would Ryan succeed in his innovation? Would Alok live up to the expectations of his family? The protagonists are all aware of the grade system providing them the lucrative position in high profile corporate sectors. At the end author Chetan Bhagat wonderfully conveys the message of the novel in the form of convocation speech. Excerpt from the book.

“This is my message to all the students as you find your future. One, believe in yourself, and don't let a GPA or a performance review or promotion define you. There is more to life than these things – Your family, your friends, your internal desires and goals. And the grades you get in dealing with each of these areas will define you as a person.”

The present youth in the novels of Chetan Bhagat is very passionate and optimistic about its future. The passion and optimism is more pronounced on economic status, as they expect their status to be raised through the acquisition of academic degrees from the premier institutes. Education from the branded institutes, like IITs and IIMs, can help them to get a lucrative placement in life. This is the option for them to raise their economic condition, their lifestyle and status in their respective societies. Young people in metro cities are anxious specifically about their status and as such their anxieties are focused on employment and career where as prospects of marriage are much lower on their anxiety list. The pass outs from the premier institutes are seeking top ranking offers from the mega companies, for example, “Medha Kumari, a student of computer science engineering from NIT Patna bagged a job offer with a package of Rs 39.5 lacs per annum from Adobe this placement season. This is the highest package ever to be offered to a student at the institute. Medha, the only student to be chosen from NIT Patna by Adobe, will join Adobe, Noida in 2018, as a software development, implementation and coding officer.”⁴

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